INTRODUCTION

TO THE

SCHOOL

OF

SHAKESPEARE.

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OF

SHAKESPEARE;

Held, on Wednesday Evenings,

In the Apollo, at the Devil Tavern, Temple Bar.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A RETORT COURTEOUS ON THE CRITICKS,

As delivered at the Second and Third Lectures.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

Dr. KENRICK having advisedly deferred the printing of his edition of Shakespeare till that of Mr. Steevens appeared, the expediency of carrying his work into immediate execution is so much abated, by the labours of that Commentator, and the contributions of his correspondents, that its intended publication is, for the present, laid aside. The appearance, however, of a mutilated *play-house* copy, under the auspices of the Managers, from whose affected veneration for Shakespeare better things might have been expected, has not only alarmed the poet's admirers in general, but suggested that some pertinent observations on his writings might be now opportunely communicated to the public in a more entertaining method. Dr. K. desirous of returning, by the earliest means, the obligations he lies under to his subscribers, has therefore adopted the suggested expedient of delivering some part of his comment, with the correspondent parts of the text, in public Lectures.

He has entered, indeed, the more readily into this design, as there are a number of passages in dramatic writers, particularly in Shakespeare, which cannot be successfully elucidated without the aid of declamation. As to the title, which he has (too quaintly perhaps) presumed to give this attempt; the public may remember they were promised, many years ago, the speedy publication of a

work, to be entitled A SCHOOL OF SHAKESPEARE; but, as that performance has not yet appeared, and will now probably never make its appearance, the Lecturer thinks no farther apology neceſſary, for aſſuming a title ſo well adapted to his deſign.

N. B. The Subſcribers to Dr. K's Shakeſpeare will be admitted to the whole courſe without farther ſubſcription; or, if diſſatisfied, may have their former ſubſcription returned.

*** The communications of critical readers, tending to throw ſuch lights on the poetical or moral beauties of Shakeſpeare, as may have eſcaped his commentators, will be gratefully received and properly applied.

INTRODUCTION.

A PROFESSED panegyric on the genius of Shakeſpeare, has been the uſual preface to the various editions of his writings. A ſcholiaſt, like a tranſlator, is almoſt univerſally the encomiaſt of his author. A rhetorical expoſitor, therefore, will not be expected to break through a cuſtom; which affords ſo great a ſcope for declamation! But, to recite, what has been often written, will yield little ſatisfaction to my auditors; and, to advance any thing new on a ſubject, which has employed the pens of the greateſt wits, for almoſt two centuries paſt, is an attempt above my preſumption. For, though too much cannot be ſaid in praiſe of our incomparable poet, it may be impertinent to attempt to ſay more than has already been ſo well ſaid by others. Formal encomiums reſemble mere compliments; which are the more futile and ſuperfluous, as they rather tend to depreciate, than enhance, extraordinary merit.

It will, I flatter myſelf, be a more entertaining and uſeful taſk to exemplify the particular excellencies, which juſtify our

universal admiration of this favourite bard, than to expatiate, in general terms, on his superiority of genius. General admirers are caught by superficial attractions; and, however enthusiastic their devotion, it usually depends on the slightness of their acquaintance with the object of their idolatry.

Fools may ADMIRE, but *men of sense* APPROVE!

Approbation, therefore, must second our *applause*, to give it sterling value and prove our attachment real.—But, to *approve* we must *understand*, and fully to understand so comprehensive and sublime a writer as Shakespeare, is perhaps not quite so easy as is generally imagined. At least there are many, and those *not uncritical* readers, who are ingenious enough to confess that, after repeated perusals of his works, they seldom recur to him, without meeting with some new difficulty to surmount, or excellence to admire.

Not that I have presumed to invite my auditors to a dull enumeration of *verbal* errors, the dry investigation of doubtful phraseology, or the ellucidation of obscuri-

ties,

ties, arifing from obfolete diction and vulgar allufions; many of them too mean to excite curiofity, or too long loft to be worth the labour of refearch.—Thanks to the fucceffful induftry of more laborious criticks, they have releafed me, in a great meafure, from the painful tafk of afcertaining ambiguities, difentangling intricacies, and recovering the meaning of terms, long loft in the darknefs of antiquity!

The text of Shakefpeare gives room for a more pleafing and inftructive comment. The poetical beauties and defects of this wonderful bard, whofe works are allowed to afford the moft numerous as well as confpicuous inftances of both, fall under the immediate cognizance of the liberal fcholiaft. Hence Mr. Pope affirms, that his writings not only prefent the faireft and fulleft fubject of criticifm; but that, to criticife on them effectually, would be the beft method to form the judgment and tafte of our nation.——This were an arduous attempt indeed! An attempt, in which fo many of the leviathans of literature have failed, that it might be juftly deemed arrogance in me to refume it.

It is near twenty years ſince the admirers of Shakeſpeare were publickly addreſſed, in favour of an Editor, poſſeſſed of a genius, of which it was ſaid, as of Cæſar,

The Alps and Pyreneans ſink before it.

From him we were promiſed an edition worthy of the author and himſelf: in which the beauties of the former were to be pointed out agreeably to the ſublime imagination of the editor; who had confeſſedly all the requiſite qualifications of a great critic.

Quid dignum tanto feret hic promiſſor hiatu!

Nothing!—The promiſer was no prophet; this mighty genius, after buoying up the public expectation for about ten years, moſt egregiouſly failed in the execution of his deſign. His edition had hardly appeared, before a new one was ſet on foot by the very proprietors who had employed him; ſoliciting eleemoſynary contributions: which were levied, in much about the ſame time, with ſucceſs on the public.

In this laſt compilation, which, to the honour of the conductor, may be ſtiled a ſtupendous

ſtupendous monument of verbal criticiſm; almoſt every thing is done but that which ſeems moſt wanted; an illuſtration of the poetical beauties and moral excellencies of the writer. This was deemed ſo eſſentially neceſſary by Mr. Pope and Dr. Warburton, that they thought it incumbent on them to diſtinguiſh, by their manner of printing, the more ſtriking paſſages of the author, ſo as to arreſt the attention of the indolent, and direct the judgment of the ignorant, reader.

Dr. Johnſon, indeed, cenſures this practice as uſeleſs, or rather hurtful. Its only effect, ſays he, is to preclude the pleaſure of judging for ourſelves; to teach the young and ignorant to decide without principles; to defeat curioſity and diſcernment, by leaving them leſs to diſcover; and at laſt to ſhew the opinion of the critick, without the reaſons on which it was founded, and without affording any light by which it may be examined.

In the courſe of the preſent Lectures (which are offered, however, as a mite only into the general treaſury of expoſition) I ſhall endeavour to ſhun this cauſe of cenſure, by laying down the principles and

and giving ſuch reaſons of approbation or cenſure, as may enable my auditors to judge for themſelves; without preventing the exerciſe of their own curioſity, or altogether depriving them of that ſelf-complacency which attends the congratulation of one's own diſcernment.

It were to ſuperſede the expediency of all claſſical expoſition, ſhould we adopt the maxim, " that a reader is never pleaſed with the meaning of a writer, unleſs it be immediately obvious to his own apprehenſion."

Yet ſuch is the aſſertion of that learned commentator, who inſiſts on the facility of comprehending the works of Shakeſpeare in the following terms of amplification. " A deſcription of the obvious ſcenes " of nature, a repreſentation of general " life, a ſentiment of reflection or ex- " perience, a deduction of concluſive ar- " gument, a forcible eruption of effer- " veſcent paſſion, are to be conſidered " as proportionate to common apprehen- " ſion, unaſſiſted by critical officiouſneſs; " ſince, to conceive them, nothing is more " requiſite than acquaintance with the " general ſtate of the world, and thoſe

"faculties which he muſt almoſt bring "with him who would read Shakeſpeare." —But, granting that Shakeſpeare's reflections, reaſonings and repreſentations, were univerſally obvious, and that perſons of every capacity poſſeſs the faculties of comprehending them; it is not ſo much the exertion of abilities as of attention that is in this caſe required. The poet can be but half-read by half-readers; for the works of Shakeſpeare will by no means rank with thoſe frivolous productions, which our Engliſh Ariſtophanes facetiouſly calls pretty light ſummer reading.

Pope, in his Eſſay on Criticiſm, ſays, we ſhould read

——————— a work of wit
With the ſame ſpirit that its author writ.

To do juſtice to the poet and ourſelves, therefore, in the reading of Shakeſpeare, we ſhould ſummon up all our attention to his ſubject. The immediate comprehenſion of flights of genius and force of argument, requires that both the imagination and judgment ſhould be wide awake. It is not enough that the eye of an indolent reader run careleſsly over the page of ſuch a writer,

a writer, to take in, at ſo curſory a view, the full extent of his meaning. Even a more intent peruſer will ſometimes fail to ſeize (in a moment) that combination of ideas, which may have coſt the moſt ready writer, the labour of days, weeks, months, to collect, compare and combine.

Congenial talents, it is true, like drops of a ſimilar fluid, readily coaleſce: men of the ſame turn for obſervation, and of ſimilar modes of thinking, eaſily underſtand each other: but this is not the caſe with others, who differ as well in opinion as intellectual abilities. To ſuperior geniuſes, who may themſelves affect to vie with the great maſter of our Engliſh drama, my lectures may afford as little inſtruction as amuſement. But in this extenſive metropolis, I preſume there are to be found a ſufficient number of his more humble admirers, to whom they may prove both acceptable and uſeful, however futile or frivolous they may ſeem to men of ſuperlative ingenuity.

As to the expediency of their oral delivery, it may be pleaded, that the proprieties of dramatic compoſition ſtrike more forcibly from recital, than in peruſal. The

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ableſt commentator on Shakeſpeare might diſcover, in the declamation of a Quin or a Garrick, many exquiſite ſtrokes of character, paſſion and humour, evidently deſigned by the poet, which yet would otherwiſe eſcape the notice of the mere literary critick. Nay, it is even poſſible that the poet himſelf (who, it muſt be remembered, was but an indifferent ſtage-player) did not intend all thoſe nice touches and forcible ſtrokes of expreſſion; which an able actor or artful declaimer might, by propriety of pauſe, ſignificance of tone, and variety of cadence, give his writings in recital.

This may ſeem an hereſy, too bold to come from an orthodox admirer of Shakeſpeare, eſpecially if we admit the juſtice of the ingenious encomium, paſſed on him by one of his lateſt and beſt commentators. Shakeſpeare, ſays ſhe, (for we are told the encomiaſt is a Lady) ſeems to have had the art of the derviſe, in the Arabian tales; who could throw his ſoul into the body of another man, and be at once poſſeſſed of his ſentiments, adopt his paſſions, and riſe to all the functions and feelings of his ſituation.

But perhaps this elegant eulogy, though ſupported by as beautiful and pertinent an alluſion, may be no farther applicable than to the ſentimental powers of the writer, and not to the correſpondent ſenſations, or, in Dr. Johnſon's phraſe, effervescent paſſions of the man. The poet (like the derviſe) might be able to throw his ſoul into the unanimated body of another, without being able to accommodate his own body to the feelings and paſſions of another's ſoul: in which caſe, however juſtly he might ſpeak the general language of thoſe paſſions, he might ſtill learn ſomething from thoſe who could feel, as they ſpoke, from themſelves. If the Ghoſt in Hamlet (as we are told) was the beſt part his powers of declamation could arrive at; he could not perſonally aſſume the characters or diſplay the feelings he ſo pathetically deſcribes, while he dictates their proper language to others.

But, be this as it may, with reſpect to Shakeſpeare, it is well known to have been the caſe with many modern authors, who have been aſtoniſhed at the latent meaning, that has been diſcovered in their compoſitions, by a Garrick, a Clive, or a Pritchard. It even happens in compoſition, that a ſenſe, more

more pertinent, ſublime or profound than at firſt intended, is often ſtruck out by a happy colliſion of words, as unforeſeen as unpremeditated. If paſſages of this kind are ſometimes fortuitouſly ſuggeſted to the writer, how much oftener will his genius, or art, deſignedly preſent them to the reader; who is not to be wondered at, if he content himſelf with the more obvious meaning, that floats on the ſurface; without diving into the depths of his author.

A line or two from almoſt any claſſical writer will afford an exemplary inſtance.—In Iago's celebrated ſpeech on the ineſtimable value of a good name, he ſays,

> Who ſteals my *purſe*, ſteals *traſh*. 'Tis ſomething, nothing.
> 'Twas *mine*, 'tis *his* and has been *ſlave* to *thouſands*.

I believe ſuch in general is the manner in which thoſe lines are repeated. And yet there ſeems to be a want of meaning in the words *ſomething*, *nothing*, ſo delivered. The antitheſis in the ſecond line, alſo, is confined to the various poſſeſſors, in the words *mine*, *his*, and *thouſands*. Whereas, if we conceive the ſpeaker to pauſe, on call-

ing his *purſe*, *traſh*, then to admit it to be *ſomething*, or make it a queſtion; and afterwards go on, as if upon farther thought, more forcibly to undervalue it, by calling it expreſsly *nothing*, the ſenſe would be greatly improved. Again, if we extend the antitheſis in the ſecond line, or rather diſtinguiſh another, between the words, *'Twas*, *'tis* and *has been*, denoting the futility of the poſſeſſion, as merely temporary and tranſitory; the paſſage would, in this caſe, be much more pregnant of meaning.

> Who ſteals my *purſe*, ſteals *traſh* —'Tis *ſomething!*—
> *Nothing*—
> 'TWAS *mine*, 'TIS *his* and HAS BEEN ſlave to *thouſands*.

A ſimilar inſtance of the double antitheſis is to be found in the firſt book of Milton's Paradiſe Loſt: where Satan ſays, it is

> Better to *reign* in *Hell* than *ſerve* in *Heaven*.

If I remember right, Mr. Quin, as well as ſome other celebrated readers of Milton, gave no farther meaning or energy to this line; although it is evident, from the context, that the antitheſis is double, and re-

quires a farther diſtinction of emphaſis between *reigning* in *Hell* and *ſerving* in *Heaven*.—The fallen ſpirit is addreſſing his companion in revolt, on the ſubject of their new abode, the infernal world; of which having taken a ſurvey; he thus exclaims

——————— Here, at leaſt,
We ſhall be free; th' Almighty
——————— will not drive us hence,
Here we may reign ſecure; and, in my choice,
To reign is worth ambition tho' in Hell:
Better to REIGN in *Hell* than SERVE in *Heaven*.

Innumerable are the paſſages in poetical and particularly dramatic compoſitions, where the whole meaning of the writer is not more obvious to the reader; nor more eaſily explained, without the aid of declamation; which, when it is juſt and emphatical, renders farther explanation unneceſſary. A proper, tho' ſimple, recital of the text is hence often a better comment than whole pages of written annotations.

A judicious actor is, therefore, the beſt expoſitor of the drama. We have a ſtriking inſtance of this in Mr. Garrick; who is not improperly ſtiled a living comment on our author. What a pity that, out of

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ſo great a number of capital parts as are found in the plays of Shakeſpeare, the walk of this great comedian has (of late years at leaſt) been confined to about twelve characters in tragedy, and, I think, to one only in comedy [Benedict.]

Had all the principal perſonages, in the dramas of our immortal poet, the advantage of the living comment of ſuch an excellent actor; it would have effectually precluded the preſent undertaking. But, when ſo few of them are capitally filled, and the greater part of the reſt injudiciouſly ſhortened, with a view to accommodate them to the incapacities of inferior performers, it is doing a piece of juſtice to the poet, to endeavour to reſcue his mangled remains from ſuch injurious mutilators. My auditors will excuſe me, however, if I do not affect the grimace and roar of the ſock, or the rant and whine of the buſkin. If I have voice enough to make myſelf diſtinctly heard, and ſufficient art in the management of it to convey the meaning of the poet, the end, I propoſe, will be anſwered, in giving ſome ſatisfaction to his admirers; and, if to them, to the public

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at large; for who is not an admirer of Shakeſpeare?

Admirable as he is to be regarded as a poet, there is alſo another light, in which he is ſeldom preſented to us, tho' he appears in it, if poſſible, to ſtill greater advantage. This is that of a *moral philoſopher*; his works containing a practical ſyſtem of ethics, the more inſtructive and uſeful as the precept is almoſt every where joined to example. His moral reflections are not like thoſe of moſt other play-wrights, an adventitious appendage to the dialogue. On the contrary, they riſe naturally from the ſituation and circumſtance of the ſpeaker, and flow ſpontaneouſly from his lips, as the genuine effuſions of his heart. Hence it is that they make ſo forcible and laſting an impreſſion on the memory, and have perhaps contributed more to form our national character, for humanity, juſtice, and benevolence, than all the theoretical books of morality which have appeared in our language.

I am not ſingular in admiring this great poet as a philoſopher. The learned and ingenious Mrs. Montague obſerves, in like manner,

manner, that " we are apt to consider Shakespeare only as a poet, but he is certainly one of the greatest moral philosophers that ever lived." The testimony of Mr. Pope, on this head, does the poet the highest honour, " Shakespeare," say he, " is not more a master of the Great than of the Ridiculous in human nature; of our noblest tendernesses than of our vainest foibles; of our strongest emotions than of our idlest sensations!—Nor does he only excel in the passions: in the coolness of reflection and reasoning he is full as admirable. His sentiments, on every subject, are not only in general the most pertinent and judicious, but, by a talent very peculiar, something between penetration and felicity, he hits on that particular point on which the bent of each argument turns, or the force of each motive depends." Were any thing wanting more conclusive, we might recur to the character given of this sublime genius by one little his inferior, Mr. Dryden. " Shakespeare," says he, " was the man, who, of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul."—My auditors, I am persuaded, will agree, therefore, with me, that the understanding of English, and even

a slight

a ſlight acquaintance with the author's ſtile and phraſeology, is inſufficient to enable the generality of readers to enter fully into his ſenſe and ſpirit, without much attention and more mature reflection, than is uſually beſtowed on dramatic productions.

I ſhall hence wave farther apology, as needleſs, either for this mode of comment, or for making the School of Shakeſpeare, not a ſchool of verbal criticiſm and theatrical declamation, but of *poetical propriety* and MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

A

RETORT COURTEOUS

ON THE

CRITICKS.

THE respect which individuals owe to public opinion, especially when they solicit the public patronage, reduces them to the necessity of considering every thing as important, which regards the merit of their pretensions. It is this necessity that renders the remarks of writers, otherwise insignificant, deserving notice. Contemptible as are frequently the anonymous correspondents of newspapers, there is scarce a reader in town, to whom some one or other of those papers does not appear an oracle. In an age so divided between the bustle of business and the dissipation of divertisement, it is no wonder that curiosity should adopt the means of acquiring knowledge without the trouble of thinking. Our daily chronicles pretend to offer those means, and are therefore revered of course as oracular. Liable, however, to be deceived either by ignorance or design, their decisions, like those of the

oracles of old, ſhould be truſted with caution.

Intereſted in the effect of thoſe deciſions reſpecting the preſent undertaking, it is incumbent on me to mention their miſtake, expoſe their errour and correct their miſconception. Not that I have reaſon to complain that the majority, or the moſt reſpectable, of our diurnal critics, have not paſſed ſufficient encomiums on my firſt Lecture. The misfortune of it is, they have moſt of them applauded and cenſured in the wrong place; ſeeming not to have entered fully into my deſign.—The moſt general objection is, that I am deficient in oratory, and that I cannot "with the true ſtage-mechaniſm of proper emphaſis recite Shakeſpeare's verſification." To this, I anſwer, that I neither pretend to, nor require, the peculiar talents of an orator, or actor, to deliver a declamatory comment on that poet. I affect not the grace, but aim merely at the propriety of declamation; as it is by conviction and not perſuaſion that I would wiſh to affect my auditors. Did I pretend to oratory, I ſhould take the trouble to commit my diſcourſe, as well as all the paſſages I recite, to memory, ſo as to be able to repeat them by rote, and aſſume the different characters

of

of the respective speakers; without which it is impossible to deliver them oratorially: and the task of speaking with energy and propriety for two whole hours without book, is what I am persuaded my auditors will not think it reasonable to impose on me. The critick of the Public Advertiser, indeed, has furnished me with a better apology on this head than probably I could make for myself. He intimates, with a perhaps, what is certainly true, that the Lecturer considers himself rather as a teacher than a practitioner of eloquence, as a rhetorical professor rather than a professed orator. "It is notorious, says the critick, that the dancing-master, who teaches the art of address to others, is not the most graceful in his own deportment. The drawing-master instructs his pupils also in the rudiments of design, not by the delicate touches of the pencil, but by the coarse outlines of rough chalk: nay, we even are told there are musical connoisseurs, who would rather hear a tune hummed over by a Bach or an Arne, with scarce any voice at all, than hear it melodiously warbled by a Linley or a Davis."

Had the criticks in general attended to the motto I have adopted from Horace, signifying

ſignifying that "I meant to do the office of a whetſtone, which gives an edge to ſteel, without having any itſelf,"* they muſt all have coincided with this writer: but perhaps ſome of them did not read it, and it is not impoſſible that, being in Latin, ſome others might not—underſtand it.

As to what has been ſaid about "the *ſtage-mechaniſm of proper emphaſis*," my deſign is in part to explode the *mechanical emphaſis* of the ſtage, as altogether improper. It is the habitual exerciſe of this mode of declamation that miſleads the actor from the meaning of the author. If, while I am endeavouring, therefore, to point out this meaning merely by a different mode of declamation, I am to be judged by the very ſtandard, which I am exploding; the prepoſſeſſion of the criticks in favour of theatrical habit, places me in a very peculiar predicament. The greater the errour I may attempt to correct in ſtage declaimers, the greater the blunder I ſhall be ſuppoſed to have committed myſelf: unleſs, indeed, I ſhould trouble my auditors with a comment on every ſuch paſſage; giving the reaſons for ſpeaking it differently from others; in which caſe the taſk I have un-

* ——— Fungar vice cotis
Reddere quæ ferrum valet, exſors ipſa ſecandi. HOR.

dertaken

dertaken might, instead of *fifteen* Lectures, require fifty. I shall explain this by example.

In the tragedy of Macbeth, there is a celebrated passage, which, having long puzzled both the actors and commentators, seems at length to have obtained the general sanction of being spoken in a manner the most quaint and absurd imaginable.

After the murder of Duncan, Macbeth, whose hands are still bloody, exclaims,

> Will all great Neptune's *ocean* wash this blood
> Clean from my hand? No; this *my* hand will rather
> The multitudinous SEA *incarnadine*,
> Making the Green, One Red.

The players used to say,

> The multitudinous *seas* incarnadine
> Making the green one, red.

This the criticks objected to, as a bald and puerile mode of expression unworthy of Shakespeare. But granting that, *making the green one, red*, is a little bald and puerile, the *making the green, One red*, is full as quaint and childishly affected. Multitudinous sea in the singular, and *making the Green, One Red*, were however contended for and adopted, I think

I think, firſt by Mr. Murphy, afterwards by Mr. Sheridan, by Mr. Macklin, and, if I rightly remember, by Mr. Garrick; as alſo by Dr. Johnſon, who reads THY *multitudinous*, conceiving the laſt lines to be an apoſtrophe to Neptune.—Mr. Steevens reads the *multitudinous* SEAS in the plural, ſtill making the green, One red.—In my manuſcript text, I read partly with one and partly with the other; thinking with Dr. Johnſon it may be *thy*, and with Mr. Steevens that it ſhould be *ſeas* in the plural; at the ſame time differing with both, as to the *green's* being converted into *red*. Mr. Steevens indeed tells us, that the ſame thought occurs in an old play, called the Downfall of the Earl of Huntingdon.

He made the *green ſea red* with Turkiſh blood.

But with due deference to Mr. Steevens, the thought is not the ſame, if we read, "making the green, One red;" there is no glaring abſurdity, though there is much bombaſt, in the notion of a green ſea being turned by a bloody hand into a red one; but there is as palpable an impropriety in idea as impoſſibility in fact; for green, in the abſtract, to be turned, by any means, into red. A green ſea may become a red

ſea,

ſea, but green, the colour itſelf, can never become red: beſides, the epithet multitudinous appears in this caſe to be merely expletive and uſeleſs, eſpecially if it be ſuppoſed to mean, as our Dictionaries, citing this very paſſage, explain it, "the having the appearance of, or looking like, a multitude." For why looking like a multitude? Such an epithet applied to the ſea has here no propriety whatever. But if we take it in the ſenſe in which Shakeſpeare uſes the ſame word elſewhere, as meaning manifold, various, of different kinds, &c. there is the utmoſt propriety in it.—The colour of blood being the predominant idea in the mind of Macbeth, it is plain he means by multitudinous ſea (or rather ſeas) the many-coloured or variouſly-coloured ſeas. Geographers have their Black Sea, their White Sea, their Red Sea. And, though a natural philoſopher ſhould queſtion whether thoſe ſeas took their name from the different colours of their waters, poetical licence will ſufficiently juſtify our author in alluding to their appellation: nay, without having recourſe to poetical licence, or reſting on nominal qualities, Shakeſpeare might, as a naturaliſt, advert to the occaſional variegation really effected in the colour of the ſea by floods, currents and other

 cauſes:

cauſes: all which, however, being little and partial in compariſon of the main ocean, whoſe conſtant and general colour is green. Macbeth is made (by a very natural and eaſy climax) to inſinuate that his hand will not only incarnadine any particular ſea of what colour ſoever it be occaſionally tinged; but that it will change even the native colour of the general concourſe of waters, the main ocean, the GREEN *ſea* red.

I therefore read the paſſage thus:

Will all great Neptune's *ocean* waſh this blood
Clean from my hand? No; this *my* hand will rather
Thy multitudinous ſeas incarnadine;
Making the GREEN one, red.

Now, whither I am right or wrong in the explication of this paſſage, I ſhould read it in this manner; ſo that, if unapprized of my reaſons for it, the ſagacious critics, who have ſo greatly miſtaken my deſign, would in all probability think I had committed a blunder for want of the *ſtage-mechaniſm* of *proper emphaſis*. From this inſtance, taken from many hundreds of the like nature that might be given) may be deduced a ſufficient reaſon why I ſhould not effect the graces of elocution, were I even poſ-

ſeſſed

ſeſſed of the powers and talents for diſplaying them; and this is, that the ſtrong and pointed mode of artificial declamation which is neceſſary to convey and enforce any new or uncommon meaning, by words already well known, and ſuppoſed to be perfectly underſtood, is incompatible with the graceful cadence and voluble flow of oratory. *

In a commentator, it is neceſſary that he ſhould inveſtigate and diſcloſe all the ſenſe and meaning contained in his author. An orator who ſpeaks in his own character, or an actor who perſonates that of another, and would appear the man he repreſents, ſhould attempt to convey no more ſentiment than he can accompany with ſenſibility. On the ſtage we had rather loſe ſight of the author than the actor, who ſhould make every thing his own, and mean no more than he can deliver with gracefulneſs and eaſe. An actor, therefore, would ſometimes do well deſignedly to ſink a quaint or latent ſenſe in a ſentence overcharged

* This, with the foregoing example taken from Othello, may ſerve to ſhew the *reader* alſo the expediency of an *oral* comment on the poet; it being impoſſible for the *writer* to convey by letters the emphaſis and tones made uſe of by the *ſpeaker*.

with meaning, rather than ſacrifice the gracefulneſs of delivery and propriety of repreſentation to the preciſe expreſſion of a particular idea, when the general meaning is natural and ſufficiently full and characteriſtick without it.

Enacting words (ſays the late ingenious author of the Actor) is labour too minute.

A commentator, on the other hand, cannot be too particular, preciſe and pointed in his emphaſis; even though a diſſonant or deficient voice ſhould ſubject him to the implication of wanting what he ought not to exert, if he had them, *oratorial abilities.*

It is not merely as an orator, however, that I have been cenſured by the criticks. I have been charged as a commentator with having groſsly miſtaken my author, in clearing the character of Sir John Falſtaff of imputed malignity of diſpoſition, and in deſcribing him as a *harmleſs, inoffenſive, jocular* creature. A writer in the Public Ledger advances this charge, among other miſrepreſentations in that paper of Thurſday laſt.

That-

That Falſtaff is a *jocular* creature is univerſally admitted; but that he is *harmleſs* and *inoffenſive*, is what neither I, nor, I believe any body elſe ever before ſuggeſted. For my own part, I neither palliated his meanneſs nor extenuated his vices; but left him in full poſſeſſion of his character for gluttony, lying, cowardice and theft. This ſagacious critick, therefore, muſt be a great latitudinarian in morals and have adopted a very ſingular ſyſtem of ethicks, if he holds that a man, who is at once a glutton, a liar, a coward and a thief, is a harmleſs inoffenſive creature.

I will appeal, therefore, to my auditors, whether I have not reaſon to expect that criticks, who can ſo readily overlook the vices of mankind, ſhould have a little more candour toward their foibles and defects. They forget that I told them my lectures were not calculated for auditors of ſuperlative ingenuity; but for ſuch only as are modeſt enough to think that the poet, whoſe intellectual eye in a fine phrenzy rolling, could dart from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven, may have ſometimes ſeen farther than is commonly deſcried by the mental opticks of unpoetical or uncritical readers.

ADDITION

ADDITION

TO THE

RETORT COURTEOUS.

SUCH is the Retort Courteous to the criticks, which I had the honour of reading to my auditors laſt Wedneſday: to which ſo many objections, and of which ſo many miſrepreſentations, have been ſince made in the public papers, that it becomes neceſſary for me to make their authors ſome reply.

I have in the firſt place been charged with affecting a ſovereign contempt for newſpaper animadverſions, and yet ſtooping ſo low as to profit by them, in improving by the advice they contained. But ſurely my thinking them at firſt worth my animandverſion is a proof that the contempt, ſuppoſed to be affected, was not quite ſo ſovereign as alledged; eſpecially as I am ſaid to have thought them of ſtill ſo much more conſequence as to profit by them. It were cruel to deny the authors of theſe animad-

animadverſions the honour of having contributed to my improvement, while they admit I am improved. I am conſcious, however, of that improvement's being ſo very little, that it does neither them nor me any great credit.

But, though they admit I have improved by them, they ſeem determined not to improve by me. They allow that my remarks are ingenious, but not convincing: the critics or rather critic, for like ſovereign princes, they each write in the royal plurality, of we, us and ourſelves.—One of theſe critics in particular, whom I diſtinguiſh as much for his ſuperiour ingenuouſneſs as ingenuity, admits that my reading of the paſſage, cited from Macbeth, is defended in a plauſible manner; but that he (I ſhould ſay they) are nevertheleſs not converts to the doctrine; as they think ſuch reading exceedingly puerile, bald and improper. As to its baldneſs and puerility, I ſhall not attempt to controvert a matter of elegance and taſte; but I cannot help remarking, as ſomething whimſical, a critic's calling any expreſſion improper, who at the ſame time contends for the propriety of ſaying that the colour green may become red. He might as well

 ſay

ſay black may become white, nay better for black and white are only the extremes of light and ſhade merely colourable accidents, and not like green and red, genuine and natural colours*.

This critic ſays, "A good logician will "be able by ſophiſtry and the artifice of "words to cheat the ſenſes."—But a good logician never uſes ſophiſtry or the artifice of words, ſo that what he charges on a good logician proves that he means a bad one. Again, he ſays, "none but the "weak will give up an opinion which "was rationally founded on hearing the "ſpecious argument of an able caſuiſt." This is to ſuppoſe that a weak man is better able to found a rational opinion, or judge when it is ſo founded, than an able caſuiſt. The truth indeed is, that the weak in judgment are generally the moſt ſtrong in opinion: for, as Shakeſpeare ſays,

Conceit the ſtrongeſt works in weakeſt minds.

Or (not to go out of the line of the critic's reading,) as it is obſerved to the ſame purpoſe, in the air of a well known Burletta,

Remember, when the judgment's weak that prejudice is ſtrong.

* Green is at leaſt a ſecondary, if not a primary, colour.

I do not wonder, therefore, that our critic, even though he has conſidered, as he ſays, and reconſidered the point, ſhould ſtill remain in his former ſentiments. Had he given any hint of the manner in which he inveſtigated this knotty point, one might judge of the depth and acuteneſs of his enquiry; and of the grounds of his tenaciouſneſs of opinion. As it is, he has left the point as much in the dark as he found it. I will endeavour therefore to elucidate it a little farther. The main difficulty ſeems to lie in the meaning of the epithet multitudinous, which Macbeth gives to the ſea.

Now to come at the meaning of doubtful words in an author there are only two ways; the one by enquiring in what ſenſe they are uſed by the ſame and contemporary writers; and the other by entering fully into the ſentiment, and explaining them by their neceſſary connexion with the context. For we muſt not arbitrarily give ſuch words the meaning, we may take it into our heads ſuits beſt with the ſenſe, that we give as arbitrarily to the paſſage. This were only to make one blunder give ſanction to another.

Now

Now according to the former mode of explanation, multitudinous means as before obſerved, looking like a multitude, alſo manifold and various. Shakeſpeare calls the *tongue* multitudinous, meaning multifarious, ſpeaking many things or many languages. But neither in Shakeſpeare nor in any of his contemporary writers do we find multitudinous uſed in any ſenſe that will juſtify the various ſuppoſitions that Macbeth here gives it to the ſea, becauſe as ſome ſay, the ſea has many waves, or as others, becauſe it has many bays, creeks and harbours, or becauſe as others will have it, it contains ſhoals of herrings and multitudes of mackrel.

Attending to the ſecond mode of explanation, we ſhould enter into the ſentiment and place ourſelves in the ſituation of the ſpeaker, aſſume his perſonage, and aſk ourſelves what we ſhould have ſaid in the ſame circumſtances. The whole attention of Macbeth was engroſſed with the ſight of his bloody hands. His whole thoughts intent on the means of clearing them of that carnadine hue they were ſo deeply dyed with; ſo deep indeed, that he ſays all Neptune's ocean will not waſh them clean; Nay rather theſe hands will incarnadine

Neptune's ſeas. Is it reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that, in this agitation of mind, Macbeth could advert to any other property of thoſe ſeas than that which immediately related to the object before him? Would he call the ſea multitudinous becauſe it contained a multitude of fiſh, as if he were the buſy-brain'd projector of a Britiſh fiſhery? Impoſſible! It is for thoſe reaſons I continue ſtill as firmly fixed in my opinion as the critic in his: to whom, however, being open to conviction, I ſhall be ready to give it up, if after having really conſidered and re-conſidered the point, he puts on his conſidering cap once again, and gives me a better reaſon for his opinion than I have given for mine.

To the critic of the Publick Ledger I am indebted for the miſrepreſentation of almoſt every thing he hath noticed; particularly for falſely charging me with adopting the meanings I explode, and altering the text of Shakeſpeare to countenance explanations, which I deduce from that text's ſtanding as it does. Theſe miſrepreſentations are the more injurious as they ſubject me to unjuſt cenſure and expoſe me to unmerited ridicule. If they proceed,

therefore, from the critic's having unfortunately a treacherous memory and to his liberal propenſity to do me, on all occaſions, a good turn, I hope he will, for the future, ſpeak truth and I am armed againſt his malevolence. It is this writer who repeatedly informs the publick, that the ladies yawn, as he elegantly expreſſes it, at my lecture, for want of wit and muſick. But, after ſuch bad proofs as he has given of his veracity, he will give me leave to doubt the fact; for, tho' this gentleman may require a jig or a pun to prevent his falling aſleep, I have too good an opinion of my fair auditors to ſuppoſe they cannot be kept, two or three hours, awake, by a comment on Shakeſpeare, without the aid of a jeſt or the ſqueaking of a fiddle. Indeed I could not conceive that a critic could ſuppoſe my lectures calculated for ſuch auditors as can be amuſed with the entertainment they now meet with at the playhouſes and the puppet-ſhews.

To the Public Advertiſer, Gazetteer, and moſt of the evening papers I am obliged for their truth, their impartiality and their candour.

There

There is alſo a morning paper which has honoured me nearly as much by its abuſe; but I have too much reſpect for my auditors to notice any thing inſerted in the Morning Poſt; which, indiſcriminately abuſing every body, may be aptly enough ſaid to have a tongue that utters no ſlander.

Indeed I beg pardon of my auditors for engaging their attention ſo long on the miſtakes of verbal criticks and the wilful miſrepreſentation, of mere word-catchers. The ſubject of to-night's lecture is of more importance, and will therefore be more ſerious than I propoſe to make the School of Shakeſpeare in general. If I ſhould happen, however, to be too grave for my auditors to night, I may make them amends another time, by more frequent flaſhes of Shakeſpeare's merriment. At the ſame time I muſt beg leave to obſerve, that as I intend (with a view to have this undertaking more generally comprehended) to publiſh my Introductory Addreſs and Reply to the Criticks in a printed pamphlet, I mean, with the conſent of my auditors, to recite them no more, nor take any farther notice

in

in this place of the news-paper remarks, as it would lead me into a field of altercation too wide to be comprized within the limits of my preſent plan. If my auditors, however, ſhould have any queſtions to propoſe reſpecting the elucidation of Shakeſpeare, and will take the trouble to reduce them to writing, I ſhall endeavour to give them, after due conſideration, a ſatisfactory anſwer.

FINIS.

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